

## **Balloon Fiesta Rally – by Kirk Greiner**

### **[PHOTO LINK](#)**

As Albuquerque, NM was celebrated its 36th annual international Balloon Fiesta, we were there to celebrate with them. “We” consisted of 21 RVF rigs led by Wagon Master Dick Nivens. What a fantastic rally! It was different. Dick arranged for RV parking adjacent to the field where all the balloons were launched. Most rigs arrived on Thursday, 4 October, the day before the rally started and stayed at the Enchanted Trails RV Park which had full utilities. We filled our water tanks, dumped our holding tanks and prepared for three days of dry camping. Friday morning, we formed a caravan and followed Dick to the Fiesta site. We were among many RV arriving and as we reached the front of the line, a guide car took us under its wing and we proceeded with some trepidation towards the rear of the park far from the activities. But then we learned we were headed for the President’s site. Our final camping area was outstanding; high above the middle of the launching field with an area to place our chairs and watch the activities.

We didn’t have a meeting room so Dick staked out a large tree (the only one around) and we arranged tables under it for our group’s meals. Breakfast, afternoon cocktails, hors d’oeuvres, and dinner entrees here all served there. Everyone brought his or her own chair and small table and we gathered in a circle. Electricity was furnished for coffee by Harry Walls who moved his motorhome behind the tree and ran his generator.

Saturday morning, everyone was up early. The Dawn Patrol of balloons got off the ground sometime after 6 AM, and before the 7:05 AM sunrise. Their burners lit the translucent balloon envelopes making a nice display. Then Mass Ascension started around 7 AM when some 360 balloons were launched. It was clear, cool, and there was very little wind. Some of us went down on the field and rubbed elbows with some 100,000 other people as the balloons were inflated and launched. Other watched from the edge of the lot where our motorhomes were. Saturday night, the Balloon Glow was cancelled due to high winds (above 10 mph) but the fireworks display was beautiful

Sunday was a repeat of Saturday with the morning Dawn Patrol and Mass Ascension. The winds were calm in the evening so the BALLOON Glow event took place where all of the balloons were inflated after sunset but did not fly. The big gas burners shot flames up into the balloon providing a spectacular scene. This was followed by another spectacular set of evening fireworks.

A wonderful time was had by all. We were saddened that Dicks wife, Ilene, could not be with us. She remained at home due to health reasons.

Those that couldn’t join us missed a truly unique and beautiful event and rally.